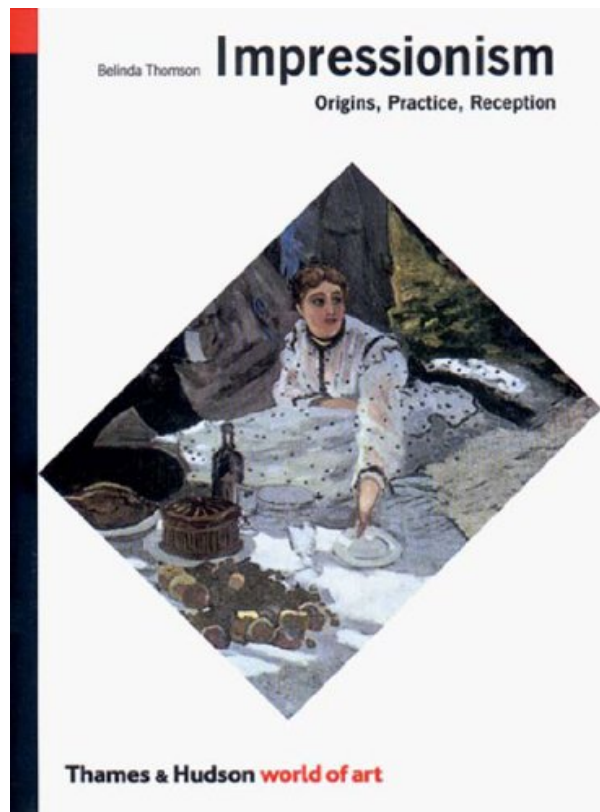


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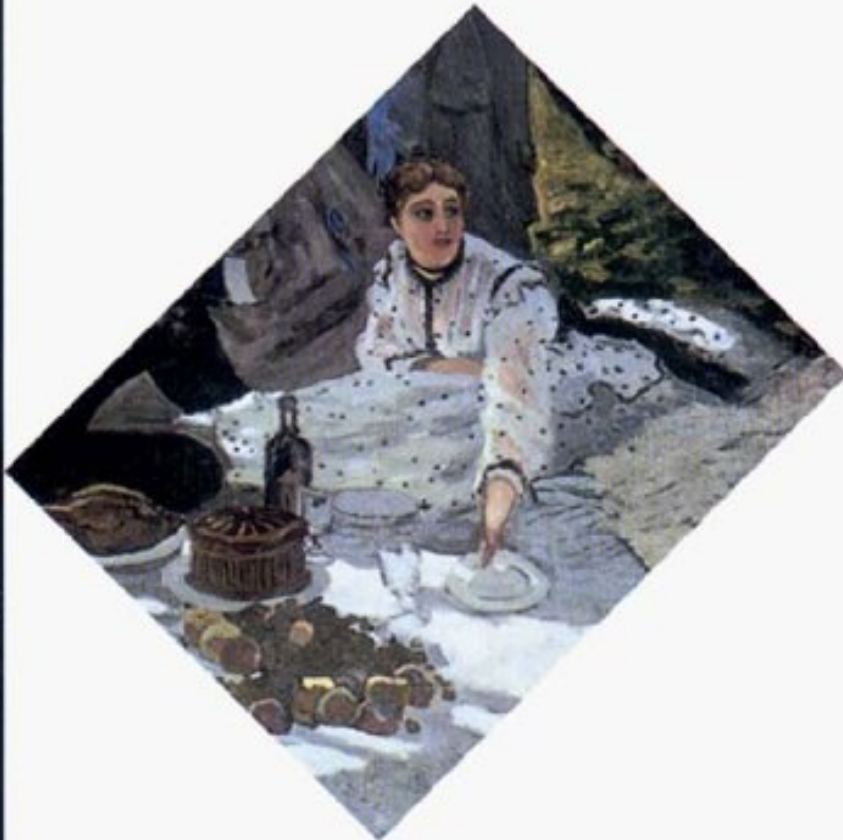
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# Impressionism

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## Review

[A]n art-historical tour de force.... It really is top notch and a pleasure to read. -- Linda Nochlin, author of *Women, Art, and Power*

## About the Author

Belinda Thomson has published extensively within the fields of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. She has made a particular study of Paul Gauguin, with whom Van Gogh famously enjoyed a sustained artistic dialogue. Thames & Hudson has published two of her books, *Gauguin* and *Impressionism: Origins, Practice, Reception*, both in the World of Art Series.

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During the 1870s and 1880s, a loose group of French artists, including Pissarro, Monet, and Renoir, adopted a style of painting and subject matter that challenged the art prompted by the Academie Francaise and the Salons where "official" assumptions about the meaning of painting prevailed. What has been called "the revolutionary nature of the Impressionist enterprise" emerged from political radicalism, belief in science and individualism, and a view of art true to modern life and to immediate visual perception. In all these respects, Impressionism initiated the radical tendencies of modern art. Today the revolutionary aims of Impressionist artists are generally overlooked. Impressionist art has been marketed more successfully than any other style: the price of Impressionist paintings surpasses that of the Old Masters, exhibitions draw blockbuster crowds, and books and mass reproductions are ubiquitous. In her perceptive new survey, Belinda Thomson challenges both sentimentalized and simplistic views of Impressionism. Drawing upon recently discovered documents--critical reviews and letters between artists, writers, and dealers--she illuminates the thinking and the personal lives of the artists themselves, examining the factors and experiences that allowed Impressionism to develop when it did. She investigates the family background of the Impressionists, the importance of the art market and collecting, and the influence of the critical reception to their exhibitions. 250 illustrations, 200 in color.

- Sales Rank: #122626 in Books
- Color: White
- Published on: 2000
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x .80" w x 6.00" l, 1.19 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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## Most helpful customer reviews

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Perhaps the best brief introduction to Impressionism

By Robert Moore

Belinda Thomson's contribution to the Thames & Hudson World of Art series is one of the best that I have

encountered yet. One of the things that I most like about this series is the way that they have attempted over time to introduce new volumes on subjects that have more or less been covered before in order to provide a new treatment of the subject in attune with the latest critical scholarship. While some older World of Art titles touching upon the Impressionists preceded the period of influence and work of scholars like T. J. Clark, Robert L. Herbert, Ruth Berson, Patricia Mainardi, and many other contemporary art critics, Thomson carries out a complete reevaluation of the work of the Impressionists by pulling on the work of the recent scholarship. As a result, I believe that this volume is now the finest short introduction to the Impressionists now in print. It doesn't supercede larger, more in depth studies like Herbert's *IMPRESSIONISM: ART, LEISURE, AND PARISIAN SOCIETY* or John Rewald's older, almost encyclopedic history, but anyone wanting to gain an overview of Impressionism is unlikely to find a better brief study.

Although Thomson discusses many of the lesser Impressionists as well, she concentrates on a relatively small number of central figures, some who have only recently begun to receive the degree of attention that they deserve. She deals with Manet (and Bazille) as the crucial precursor and early collaborators, and then focuses on Monet, Degas, Renoir, Morisot, Sisley, Pissaro, Caillebotte, Cassatt, Gauguin, Fatin-Latour, and Guillaumin, and also Cézanne, whose relationship with the group was less clear. Each chapter tends to deal with most or all of these figures. These chapters she arranges around specific topics and themes. Thus, her study is driven more by ideas and themes than by chronology or biography, though neither of these elements is entirely missing. I found this thematic approach to be extremely effective, and some of the chapters shed a great deal of new light upon the Impressionists for me. For instance, I especially profited from the discussion of what light the marriages of the various Impressionists shed upon their social assumptions and their art. She also does a splendid job throughout of explaining the connection between their audiences, the avenues available to them for displaying their work, and the role of the art dealers in making their works available to the buying public.

A book of this size will of necessity have limitations placed upon it. Thomson has chosen to focus more upon the larger context of the work of the Impressionists, and has perhaps less discussion of specific works of art than other books on the subject. Some may find this a weakness, but in my opinion most of the other books have neglected context for discussion of specific paintings. Thus, sometimes a mildly ahistorical (in some cases a profoundly ahistorical) approach is taken. I loved the very concrete picture of the Impressionists' world that Thomson draws.

In short, one can hardly hope for a better introduction to the Impressionists than this one. I should mention one further improvement Thames and Hudson has been making in its most recent additions to the series: a greatly increased use of color reproduction. In the past, a few illustrations would be in color, but most would be in black and white. Now, over half of the illustrations are in color.

6 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Written by a scholar for fellow scholars

By SandyBeach

I guess I'm the only reviewer who is annoyed by the writing style featured in this book. The relevant facts and concepts could have been presented with so much more concision. I found the book to be a bit of a slog. Much of the material does not seem to stay on point. It reads rather like a PhD thesis, with the author intent upon demonstrating her complete breadth and depth of knowledge, rather than like a book intended for general readership. That is to say, not much thought was given to the narrative aspect. The author had quite a challenge to meet, in that the French impressionist painters were visually chronicling tumultuous changes throughout every aspect of French society in the 1870s and 1880s. Nevertheless, the artfulness of a literary work can sometimes be enhanced as much by what is left out, as by what is included. There is much useful information in this book, but it could benefit from a skillful editing.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

THEY CAN KEEP TRYING TO PUBLISH BETTER BOOKS....

By George Sand

On the subject of impressionism, but, so far, that has not happened. Thomson and Howard's 1988 publication managed to capture the essence of the impressionist movement in 192 huge pages which are filled with the best photos I have seen of both well-known and less well-known works of everyone from Bazille to Vuillard. No one is left out here- there were more and better impressionist artists than Monet, Manet, and Renoir. The history and interpretive text in this book is superior to any I own. This is a treasure.

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